Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

INDEX

AGRI-FOOD COMPANIES GET STUDENT RESEARCH HELP 07-51-218

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR EQUINE WELFARE AWARDS 07-51-219

BE IT CATTLE OR CROPS, IT ALL BEGINS WITH THE SOIL 07-51-220

IT'S READING, WRITING AND RODEO FOR SOME SASKATCHEWAN STUDENTS 07-51-221

Farm and Food Report is produced weekly by the Zapwell Communications Group for Communications Branch, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
Contact: Amanda Dauk
101-3085 Albert Street, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4S 0B1
Telephone: (306) 787-5157, Fax: (306) 787-0216
Internet Page: http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-51-218
Week of December 17, 2007

AGRI-FOOD COMPANIES GET STUDENT RESEARCH HELP

Applications are now being accepted for the 2008 edition of the Student Assisted Business and Marketing Plan program offered by the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan (ACS) and the University of Saskatchewan. The program matches up agri-food companies with the research talents of U of S agriculture students.

"During the first year-and-a-half of the program, we had approximately 38 projects split evenly between marketing and business plan development," said Bryan Kosteroski, the Value Chain Specialist at ACS. "We just had students complete 10 marketing plans and six business plans."

The program is intended to assist companies in developing strategic business and marketing plans for their products. The companies are chosen by application to the council.

"We work with the U of S and look at projected numbers of students," Kosteroski said. "We normally have more projects than students, and we assign four students per project."

Kosteroski says the participating companies receive a high degree of professionalism and commitment from their student-assistants.

"They are either third-year or fourth-year students," he said. "They work on these projects for approximately three months. It's very intense, and a major part of their marketing program."

The students receive course credit for their work, and don't just spend time in the library or on their computers.

"They go out into the community," Kosteroski said. "For example, we have a lot of projects where they do taste-testing of products in restaurants. They talk to chefs, or to distributors, or go into retail stores and food service outlets. So the students are getting real life experience in what it takes to develop marketing strategies and business plans."

The program is particularly well-suited to start-up companies. Due the assistance of the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan (ACAAFS) program, ACS is able to pay half of the $500 cost of each project, leaving the companies to pay only $250.

(more)

"It gives small, entry-level companies an insight into where they have to go and what they have to do in the future," Kosteroski said. "Once they use the business or marketing plan to a certain extent, they will grow with it. We've had some companies that have used this program more than once, because they are looking at different marketing avenues, such as food service or retail. It could be into studies of consumer acceptance of products."

At this point, the program is accepting applications for projects which will be approved in August of 2008, with students getting down to work later in the fall. The applications are available on the ACS website at www.agcouncil.ca.

Kosteroski says applying is not a difficult process. "We work with the clients. They'll put an application in, and we'll contact them and talk about expanding on their needs to make sure we focus on the highest priorities," he noted. "Then we can look at additional projects for that company."

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Bryan Kosteroski, Value Chain Specialist
Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan
Phone: (Toll Free) 1-800-641-8256
E-mail: kosteroskib@agcouncil.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-51-219
Week of Week of December 17, 2007

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR EQUINE WELFARE AWARDS

Nominations are now being accepted for the third annual Awards of Distinction for Equine Welfare in Saskatchewan. The awards are jointly presented by the Saskatchewan Horse Federation and the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan.

"The idea was that we wanted to emphasize the importance of good animal welfare with horses, with horse owners and users," said Mae Smith, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Horse Federation. "We've always had a strong relationship with the Farm Animal Council. The Saskatchewan Horse Federation was one of the founding members that brought the council together as an entity."

The awards are intended to highlight the achievements of leaders in the equine industry, and recognize the contributions made to the equine community by a wide variety of individuals.

There are four categories of awards:

Equine Welfare Innovation: This award recognizes a person or company who has developed a new process, product or source of knowledge that has made a significant improvement in the welfare of horses in Saskatchewan. The recipient will also be saluted for efforts to work collectively with the horse industry to share the innovation.

Equine Welfare Leadership: This award recognizes a person, syndicate or other equine business owner who integrates animal welfare into the core business strategy and has raised the bar regarding animal welfare expectations. This individual or company leads by example. The award will recognize an active horse owner.

Equine Welfare Communication: This award recognizes a person, organization or company who has taken an active role in effectively conveying equine welfare issues and raising awareness of equine welfare with the general public and the agri-food industry.

Equine Welfare Young Steward of the Future: This category honours a young person between the ages of 13 and 25 who has shown, as a horse owner or through interaction with others, the importance of commitment to responsible equine care.

According to Smith, everyone should feel free to nominate any person or company that they believe fulfills the award criteria.

(more)

"These awards are for anyone, not just members of our organizations," she said. "We want to be able to reach out into the community and really acknowledge those people who have done something to make it a better world for horses."

Smith says that the equine industry is vibrant and growing in Saskatchewan.

"We're seeing a big rise in the number of trainers that are involved, and the total number of horses is on a steady increase," she stated. "If you look at the number of stables that have sprung up out of nowhere, they are full and looking for people."

The Saskatchewan Horse Federation currently has a membership of approximately 6,000.

Nominations for the Awards of Distinction for Equine Welfare close January 22, 2008. Nomination forms are available on the websites of the Saskatchewan Horse Federation (www.saskhorse.ca) and the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (www.facs.sk.ca). Anyone with questions about the nomination process is welcome to call the horse federation at (306) 780-9244.

The awards will be handed out at the annual Saskatchewan Horse Federation conference in Regina on March 8, 2008.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Mae Smith, Executive Director
Saskatchewan Horse Federation
Phone: (306) 780-9244
E-mail: shfdirector@sasktel.net

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-51-220
Week of December 17, 2007

BE IT CATTLE OR CROPS, IT ALL BEGINS WITH THE SOIL

Crop production and cattle production are often viewed as two separate streams in the overall agricultural industry. Although there are many differences between them, these two sectors have one major factor in common: soil quality is the basic foundation for a successful operation.

Adrienne Hanson, a Livestock Development Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture, says soil is the starting point of almost every farm. "The soil determines productivity, fertility, plant growth, shelter availability, water availability and much more. The material beneath our feet is alive with fungi, micro-organisms and macro-organisms that determine how fertile and, therefore, how productive the soil may be."

Soil type varies throughout the province, but Hanson says there are many things producers can do to ensure the best quality soil possible for their area.

"Improving the soil is something everyone can do with just a few adjustments to everyday practices," she stated. "As the producer cares for the soil, many other production issues will also be resolved. Beyond stopping erosion, we can significantly boost the productivity and quality of soil by improving its health."

Good soil health depends on cycling organic material and nutrients. The traditional method of raising cattle in Saskatchewan consists of packaging up feed grown in the summer, transporting it in from the field, feeding it in a smaller penned area, and then hauling the manure out the following fall.

Considering our cold winters and traditional calving period, this process was necessary to protect the animals and ensure feed is available. But Hanson says it also removes nutrients and organic matter from the soil and deposits them in the yard.

"Not only does this practice generate large manure hauling bills, it puts farm families at risk of contaminating their water supply from infiltration and runoff by nutrient-loading at the yard," she noted.

Hanson points out that modern agricultural research has been strong in this area, bringing forward alternative feeding strategies for the field or hay land that eliminate the need to haul hay and straw, while improving organic matter and nutrient cycling. These technologies, including bale grazing, swath grazing, stockpiling forage and more, offer excellent opportunities for producers to promote soil health by more evenly distributing organic matter and manure than would be the case in a dry lot.

(more)

Soil health is also improved by promoting soil structure, and thereby water infiltration. According to Hanson, this means increasing the pore space in the soil, which provides a good place for water to accumulate. Surface condition is very important in retaining precipitation. Heavy, continuous stocking rates often result in crusting and the loss of soil porosityl, which means faster runoff, less infiltration and more erosion.

Expanding crop rotations to include perennial forages like alfalfa can likewise help to restore soil and root health, and provide nitrogen. But Hanson notes that the crop must be properly managed to ensure plant longevity.

"Proper supplement, water and shelter management, as well as controlled grazing, prevents animals from congregating in one location, thereby preventing the overgrazing of select plants, soil compaction and nutrient-loading," she said.

Given the strong link between soil quality and production quality, Hanson says it makes good sense for producers of all types to incorporate strategies for soil improvement into their farming practices.

"Basically, good soil grows better plants that produce the best beef," she noted.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Adrienne Hanson, Livestock Development Specialist
Saskatchewan Agriculture
Phone : (306) 848-2380
E-mail : ahanson@agr.gov.sk.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 07-51-221
Week of December 17, 2007

IT'S READING, WRITING AND RODEO FOR SOME SASKATCHEWAN STUDENTS

It is not uncommon to find Saskatchewan high school students involved in all sorts of extracurricular athletics like basketball, volleyball or football. But what about rodeo?

It may come as a surprise to learn that rodeo is indeed the activity of choice among dozens of young people across the province, "spurred" on by a non-profit Saskatchewan organization.

The Saskatchewan High School Rodeo Association (SHSRA) was formed in 1991, with the goal of strengthening the sport of rodeo in the province. It is an affiliate of the National High School Rodeo Association, a fraternity that involves five provinces and approximately 40 U.S. states, as well as Australia. It is the fastest growing rodeo association in the world, with a membership of over 13,000.

Maxine Lehmann, who serves as the secretary for the SHSRA, says Saskatchewan, itself, currently has around 125 members, both male and female.

"Our members come from all corners of Saskatchewan, and our rodeos are held all across the province, as well as a few we work on with our sister associations in Alberta and Manitoba."

In its efforts, Lehmann says the SHSRA adheres very closely to the mission statement of its national association, which is to:

- promote the sport of rodeo and the highest type of conduct and sportsmanship, and expose its positive image to the general public;
- preserve the western heritage;
- offer a privilege of family bonding;
- offer an opportunity of continuing education; and
- maintain the highest regard for the livestock.

The rodeo year starts in August and ends with the provincial finals in the first week of June, with a bit of a break during the winter months. Joining in the fall will give members the best chance of participating in the most events and accumulating points towards the SHSRA year-end awards. However, membership can be taken out at any time during the year, and participants and their families are encouraged to get involved in whatever manner time permits.

(more)

Membership in the SHSRA is open to any high school student under the age of 20, from grades nine to 12. There is also a "Wrangler Division" for students from grades six to eight.

Lehmann says the association strongly emphasizes academics and responsibility among the young people who join the group. Participants must maintain grade eligibility and meet behaviour conduct standards established by their high school and the SHSRA.

"We think it's just as important that we help our young people to grow into good citizens as into good rodeo riders," she stated. "It's a really good incentive for the kids."

Many of the athletes who participate in the SHSRA go on to compete at the college level in Canada or the United States when they finish high school, sometimes even with a scholarship in hand.

"In 2006, we actually had three of our kids from Saskatchewan win Canadian titles, and they're all going to Lakeland College right now in Vermillion, Alberta," Lehmann noted. "They're all on the rodeo team at the college."

For Lehmann, the best part of being involved in the SHSRA is the social aspect. "Just seeing the kids making new friends is awesome," she said. "It's really family oriented, and you get to make lifelong friends. We still run into people whose kids have graduated, but they still come to events to watch the competitions and cheer on the participants."

For those interested in finding out more about the SHSRA, information on becoming a member – or becoming a sponsor – can be found online at www.shsra.com, or by calling Lehmann herself at (306) 246-4421.

"We really rely on our sponsors to make our association and our events a success," she said. "As such, we'd be interested in hearing from any business, any corporation or any individual who might want to support our efforts and get their name known among our participants in this growing provincial, national and international network."

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Maxine Lehmann, Secretary
Saskatchewan High School Rodeo Association
Phone: (306) 246-4421
E-mail: a.m.lehmann@xplornet.com
Website: www.shsra.com